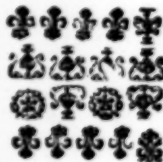


A
DISCOURSE
CONCERNING
Divine Providence,

In Relation to
NATIONAL JUDGMENTS.

Thomas Smith D.D.



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Notwithstanding that it is most consonant to reason to believe, that he who made the World doth govern it, and that all things are subject to the Laws of Providence, and that the order and course of nature, (whereby things act regularly, and make up that beauty and harmony, and proportion, which is visible throughout the World) is not the effect of chance, but of contrivance and design, and owes its original to the divine will, regulated by an infinite wisdom; yet such is the pride of some, who yet cannot but be conscious of their own defects, and how little they are able to do ei-

ther of themselves apart, or in conjunction with others, in comparison of ~~what they see done~~ both in heaven and upon earth, as that they will scarce acknowledge God to be supreme, but set up for themselves as absolute, and think to reverse his decrees by their wit and policies, attributing the success of their counsels to the strength of their parts and wisdom, and never referring their defeats and disappointment to his over-ruling power, but to some cross-accident,

* *Matchiavel* in his *Prince*, speaking of the ill success of the counsels, designs, and enterprizes of *Cæsar Borgia*, *nac que da una straordinaria & estrema malignità di fortuna.* cap. vii.

which they should have provided against; and then * they cry out upon the *extreme malignity and spitefulness of fortune*, as they speak, when all their wicked, and devilish po-

licies have been blasted, and proved to be nothing but elaborate folly.

Besides, they will have all the great revolutions that are brought upon the World, to be the results of meer nature, which they set up as a distinct principle from *Providence*, that is, that they flow from a series of natural causes linkt and tyed together, and that such a kind of combination necessarily produceth such effects, and that all those astonishing acts of *Providence*, which we by a general name call *judgments*, are natural, and consequently in a manner fatal and periodical.

ridical. What is this, but to leave the World to it self, and to exclude God from having any thing to do in the Government of it, and in effect to rob him of the glory and perfections of his Godhead? But I know not, whether the folly or impiety of this opinion be the greater, not to acknowledge a divine hand in those events, which are confessedly extraordinary.

Let us lift up our eyes to the Heavens, and contemplate the number of the Stars, their greatness, their inexhausted light, their regular and uninterrupted motion and order; and let us fancy, if we can, that they made themselves, or that such glorious bodies resulted from the fortuitous concurrence of little particles, floating up and down, in an infinite space, according to the idle and precarious Hypothesis of *Epicurus*: Let us turn our Eyes downwards and look into our selves, and reflect upon the faculties of our mind; upon the power and command, which we have over our selves and our actions; upon the Law imprinted upon our Nature; upon those notions of good and evil, that grow up with us, and which we can never throw off; and upon the dictates and judgment of Conscience; and this will shew us, that we are fit Subjects, and capable of a Law. After this, Let us proceed to consider the Original of our being, the preroga-

tive which reason gives us above other creatures, and the obligations lying upon us as we are men; and this will prove to us, that we are not only capable of, but actually under a Law; that we are accountable for the actions of our lives to a supreme power, and that every violation of the divine law, the eternal and unchangeable Law of righteousness, which God has revealed and manifested, not only in the Scriptures, but in our very nature, is justly punishable by him. This being once granted, we shall be soon made to confess, except we will do violence to our reason, that God shows his anger against sin by the *judgments*, which He brings upon the world, and that nothing of this nature doth come to pass, or can come to pass, without his order and appointment, and but for some cause. The Prophet *Amos* chap. iii. verse 6. lays it down by way of question and appeal to the reason and conscience and understanding of all mankind, *shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?* which according to the known laws and methods of arguing, amounts to this universal negative proposition, that there neither is, nor can be any *judgment* in a City or Kingdom, whereof God is not the Author.

Now in the first place, in order to vindicate the honour of the divine providence, I lay down
the

the following proposition as infallibly certain, that no evil of punishment which is brought upon the World, happens by chance ; and particularly, that those *judgments*, which seem to derive from natural causes, are the effects of his justice and governing power : which I thus briefly prove.

That God doth concern himself with the transactions of men, and either doth or will punish them sooner or later, according to their misbehaviour and demerit, hath been the belief of the very Heathen : notwithstanding the corruption and degeneracy of their manners, notwithstanding that vast number of false opinions, which they had taken up according to their fancy, and which made way for others of a fatal consequence, to the great shame and discredit of their reason, and notwithstanding all those brutish customs, and violations of the laws of humanity which they had brought into practice, the impressions of this fundamental truth of Nature were made so deep upon their minds, that they could not totally efface them. In a time of common calamity, for instance, when they were distressed by an invading Enemy, or when a Plague had diffused its venom over their Country, or in case of any violent inundation, or famine, or earthquake, they acknowledged, that this was the punish-

punishment and demerit of their sin; that their Gods were angry with them; and that the way to get these judgments removed was to appease their anger: whereupon they erected altars, and heaped up sacrifices upon them: some devoted themselves to death, and others were offered up alive, they thinking to gain the favour of their Deities by such kind of barbarous, and bloody rites. 'Tis certain, that they had corrupted this truth horribly by their superstitions and impieties; but the foundation and ground was, that there was a vindicative Justice, a *Nemesis*, which proportioned our punishments according to the measures and degrees of guilt.

Now I demand,

1. If all things come to pass of themselves, without being guided and directed by an invisible hand, how came the belief of the contrary so universal? It is a blemish to our reason to imagine, that by the constitution of humane nature false principles should be infused into our minds, and that we should be fatally inclined to error; or that all the World should mistake in the belief of this great truth, that there is an all-wise *Providence*, except a very few, whose interest it is to wish there were none, that they might live as they list, according to their corrupt inclinations, without the least molestation or disturbance. And

yet

yet these very men, who deny a *Providence*, cannot but acknowledge and confess, that it is agreeable to reason, yea and necessary to the well-being of the World, that there should be such an over-ruling power, regulated and directed by the highest wisdom. For if in a private family there could be no peace nor safety without rules and orders to be observed by every one in their respective qualities; if in a Kingdom confusions could not possibly be avoided without Laws, they being the ligaments of the body politick, that tie the members of it together, whereby they perform the several offices of Civil life, in an orderly conjunction: much more would the World, which consists of such a variety of parts, fail and decay, if the Creator had not set them a Law which they are not to transgress, and if they were not restrained and kept in from preying one upon another, and if *an omnipotent and all-wise God* had not the whole ordering and disposal of them.

2. How came things to be endowed with those qualities, which produce such strange and admirable effects, as we daily see and hear of? 'Tis a vain attempt to go about to explain and solve the appearances of nature by the *Mechanical Philosophy*, how witty, and subtle, and refined soever, without believing God, not only

to have created matter, and put this matter into motion, but to determine and modify the several motions of it: and tho some effects flow necessarily from their causes according to the established laws of mechanism, yet this was wholly according to the will and contrivance of the first cause: nor can they display this vertue without the divine concurrence, all second causes in their several motions needing the continuation of the divine power and influence, in order to their operations, as well as to their subsistence. All things then are at the disposal of God, who makes use of them, as it pleaseth him, and the vertue, which they have, derives from him. Even men are the instruments of his will, and that without any restraint of, or prejudice to their natural or moral Liberty. He brings about the purposes of his *Providence*, by actions which they design to other ends, nay sometimes by their sinful passions, and the exorbitances of their temper. *Nebuchadnezzar* a neighbour Heathen Prince made war upon the *Jews*, Gods own people, either to satisfy his thirst of fame and glory, or to enlarge his dominion, or it may be upon some pretended affront or injury done him, or the like: and yet God calls him *his servant*, *Jerem. xliii. 10.* because by him he punished that people for their Sins: and it was upon this account,

count, that *Attilas*, such another *instrument* in the hand of God, as was *Oliver Cromwel*, when with his barbarous troops he broke into *Christendom*, as if he had received a commission from heaven to execute Gods wrath upon the Christians of that Age for their luxurious and unchristian lives, had the title of *flagellum DEL*. None can deny civil war to be a grievous judgment to a Nation, notwithstanding all the plausible pretensions of cunning and designing men to draw the people into their party, and to take up arms in defence of Religion and Property, both which suffer infinitely more by a *Rebellion* than by a *Persecution*, if any such had followed according to their fears and jealousies; whether well grounded, or ill grounded, it matters not. yet in every such war God gives commission to the Sword, and says, *Sword go through the Land*, Ez. xiv. 17. much more may God make use of all other parts of the visible creation, which have no principle of Liberty within them. Thus *fire and hail, snow and vapour, and stormy wind*, are said, to fulfil his word, Psalm cxlviii. 8. and thus God did in the plagues of *Egypt*: and tho judgments be not always so quick and immediate, but oftentimes advance slowly and by degrees: Yet this doth not hinder, but that they are judgments still; such for instance are infectious Air, malignant

Diseases, blasting and mildew, drought and barrenness of ground. *Deut. xxviii.*

We must then look beyond natural causes, even to the God of nature, who orders and directs them to their several ends, and over-rules them and oftentimes carries them beyond their usual power, according as it seems good to his divine Wisdom, and the ends of *Providence*. In a Pestilence we must not look at the evil influences of the Air, but at the evil influences of sin, for the infection comes first thence. God might continue the same temper to the Air, if he pleased, that it might be for ever healthful; but he suffers those alterations to be made in it by degrees, and warns a Nation by such slow approaches of his future intentions. So that notwithstanding we could trace the natural and immediate causes of it, yet because they cannot act but by vertue of his influence, and he makes use of the order and course of things, as it best pleaseth him; the beginning and progress and decrease of a plague is to be ascribed to his will and pleasure, as much as that which we read of, *2 Sam. xxiv. 16. When the Angel of the Lord stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord repented him of the evil, and said to the Angel, who destroyed the people, it is enough, stay now thine hand.* And as the Angel, so what is called

called nature, is the instrument of God; and therefore God is pleased to ascribe to himself the ordinary works of it. One would judge it necessary from the constitution of the World, that there be refreshing showers and dews, to water and moisten the dry and parched ground, whose fruitfulness would otherwise fail and decay; yet this in the judgment of *Saint Paul*, was enough to convince the *Heathen*, that there is a God, as he tells the people of *Lycaonia*. *Acts* xiv. 7. *He left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.* To this

* *Tertullian* does elegantly allude, *Deum in aperto constitutum & vel ex ipsis celestibus bonis comprehensibilem ignorari non licet.*

* *De Penitentia* ex edit. Rigaltii page 143;

And indeed if we do but consider the ordinary works of Nature which we do not value by reason of their commonness, and therefore pass over slightly, we shall find so much wisdom in their contrivance, that we must of necessity have recourse to an infinite Author. If then a fruitful Summer, if a plentiful and seasonable Harvest and Vintage be a sufficient attestation of *Providence*; can we think, that *Judgments*, tho brought about by natural causes, are not the effects of the divine anger and displeasure? cannot a *Sparrow* fall to the ground without the Will

of

of God? *St. Matth. x. 29.* and shall there be any kind of *Judgment* in the World without his ordering and appointment?

It being then to be believed and acknowledged, that all *Judgments*, even such as flow from natural causes, are the designs and effects of *Providence*, I will enquire

2. Into the reasons and ends of *Providence* in in such severe dispensations. What desolations are brought upon the World, it is visible every where: there is no age, which does not furnish us with examples enough, to what great heights *Judgments* have advanced from small beginnings; how thousands have fallen by the Plague, or have perish'd in the merciless Ocean by tempests and hurricanes; or have been buried under ruins by Earthquakes; and with what cruelty the Sword hath rag'd without any distinction of Sex, or age, or quality. Every one is sensible of the miseries of humane life in common; and complaints are frequent and too bold; so obnoxious are we to the assaults of a disease, to the violence of enemies, and to the raging fury of the Elements, when let loose, that death oftentimes becomes unavoidable.

Some indeed have excluded *Providence* from having any thing to do with the Government of the World, because of these seeming perplexities, which

which they suppose cannot proceed from a Divine Administration. Hence they very presumptuously and foolishly ask, why are men, the only creatures, who seem fit to enjoy the blessings of life, put into continual frights and fears? why surrounded perpetually with dangers? why so distressed and forsaken, without being able to defend themselves? But these are the ravings of an impatient and cloudy mind, which will not consider things, but suffers reason to be overwhelmed by passion: they are besides oftentimes the product of wretched and irrational principles; such as these, that a man is under no Law and so not accountable to any supreme Being; that happiness is to be plac'd in this World only, and in the gratifications of the animal life; that it is an injury for God to deprive him of it, and that it is not forfeitable by Sin; that there is no such thing as Justice to exact the punishment of guilt; that God is content to enjoy himself in the heavens, without ever so much as casting a glance of his omniscient eye upon earth; and that he neither regards the services of his votaries, nor the impieties and profanation, and sacrileges of Atheists, and Libertines, and such like bold sinners, who defy his justice, but sits there unconcernedly without any resentment either way; as one of the number daringly asserts.

Nec bene pro meritis capitur, nec tangitur ira. Lucret.

Which is in effect and consequent to deny, that there is a God; and that men are men that is, that they act freely, or that they deserve either reward or punishment for their acting well or ill.

But tho this brutish opinion was exploded by the soberer part of the *Heathen* world, yet the difficulty remain'd among several, who were forced, from the observation of those strange events which they beheld, to confess an overruling *providence*, which brought them about, even above the hopes, and contrary to the expectations of men. This they saw and acknowledged, but they corrupted and perverted the belief of it, with a mixture of horrid and impious fancies. They thought, that God took delight in the miseries of men, and that this proceeded from an envious nature in the Deity, as if ill affected and troubled at the prosperities and successes of mankind: and that therefore he would not permit them to be long happy, but continually brought upon them some calamity or other, to take off their minds from the considerations of peace and joy, and to divide and distract them with cares and fears, as if he could not be happy while they were so.

Thus

Thus *Florus* says, that a stop was put to the advance and progress of the *Roman* arms, *sive invidia Deorum*, *sive fato*, at the time when the *Galli Senones* under *Brennus* invaded their City, and disturbed their growing Empire: and that afterward when they had conquered almost the whole World, (for so they proudly and vauntingly worded it,

Orbem cum totum Victor Romanus habebat) and were ready to enjoy the benefit of their conquests in security and peace, after the hardships and fatigues of their long continued wars, and when their Empire seemed to be so fully united in it self and grown so great and powerful, as not to be shaken or molested by any foreign power, *invidens fortuna principi gentium populo ipsum illum in exitium suum amavit*, fortune envying the Romans this glory and happiness, armed them against themselves by raising and fomenting a Civil war, occasioned by the private passions of *Cæsar* and *Pompey*: which caused that proverbial saying, so frequent in the mouths of the Common Soldiers and Ordinary sort of People,

Socer Generque perdidistis omnia and no such ill representations they made of God Almighty, cloathing him with the infirmities of a base passion, which usually dwell in ignoble and low spirited persons, and ascribing the effects of

his Justice and Governing power to disorder and trouble of mind to *envy and ill nature*. Whereas right reason should have taught them, that all imaginable happiness as well as perfection is essentially included in the Idea of God, who cannot possibly be subject to envy, which is a troublesome and vexatious passion, and that the only motive of his framing the World was his goodness. *Thou, O God, lovest all the things that are, and abhorrest nothing which thou hast made: for never wouldst thou have made any thing if thou hadst hated it, and how could any thing have endured, if it had not been thy will, or have been preserved, if not called by thee? Wisd. xi. 24, 25.* We must therefore assign other reasons of Gods proceeding so severely with men, which will fully vindicate his Providence from such an unjust and impious imputation.

I. The first is to humble us under his mighty hand, and to make us acknowledge his power and sovereignty. For what can seem more unjust and unnatural, than that men who owe their being to the goodness of God, and live upon his bounty, should yet be unmindful of him, that vile dust and ashes should lift up himself against his maker, and should enjoy the blessings of his providence, and yet not acknowledge that they are blessings, that is, the effects of his care and

and love to mankind? Yet so it is: Pride puffs men up with swelling thoughts of vanity, as if all they enjoyed were justly due to them; it makes them think too well of themselves, as if they had no need of a support, or as if it were a diminution of their greatness to live in subordination to a higher power. And from this pride proceeds carelessness and forgetfulness of God, as if serious and frequent reflections and thoughts of him put them too much in mind of their duty and obligation toward him, and of the vileness and meanness of their own condition without him. Thus they flatter themselves with dreams of folly, and are so taken up with thoughts of themselves, that they have no leisure to think of God; and especially in a course of uninterrupted happiness and prosperity, the Soul is as it were weakened, and lost, and dissolved in ease and softness; and the rational faculties are depressed and deprived of their directive power; and the gratification of a lust is set up in competition with the service of God, and oftentimes preferred before it, and the pleasures of sense prevail; and when we are full, we are apt to forget and deny God. Deut. viii. 11. 12. Prov. xxx. 9. It is but necessary when that men be taught the true and just knowledge of themselves, which is done most effectually by judgments. This

shews, how they depend necessarily upon God, and how unable they are to stand before an Almighty power; by this they are sensible, that his anger can consume them in a moment, and that his power can crush them into pieces. *Thou, even thou art to be feared, and who may stand in thy sight, when thou art angry?* Psalm lxxvi 7.

Let us deny, now if we dare (but certainly our fears and our convictions will not permit us to deny) Gods power over us, when we either hear or see so many thousands falling before us, and when we see the whole creation at his command, and doing his will. An apprehension and sense of distress and danger will bring us upon our knees, and will thoroughly convince us of our folly, to forget, much more to oppose and defy God; and will force us with trembling and amazement to acknowledge his Almightyness and power, by the *judgments* which he brings upon the World.

2. If we look about us, and observe the horrid violations of the Laws of God and Religion, we shall soon justify God in his proceeding so severely with us: for by this he shews his anger against sin, and how jealous he is of his honour. It is most certain, that this life is for the trial of our faith and obedience: and that hereafter every one shall be rewarded according to his works; and that tho God be provoked every day, yet his

his patience and goodness seem to lay restraints as it were upon his Justice, from breaking out upon the Sinner. For if God should punish as often as men sin, and should proceed according to the rigour of his justice, all mankind would sink under the weight of his heavy hand. *If thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who may abide it ?* Psalm cxxx. 3. And we see what ill use is made of Gods forbearance and long suffering, how some interpret this in their own favour, and how others harden themselves in wickedness, and sin the more boldly. *Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil.* Ecclesi. viii. 9. But to rectifie all misapprehensions, that they may not pass into general opinions; and to shew that he will not forbear always, he doth often manifest and signalize his justice, even in this life, and loudly proclaim from heaven his anger against the unrighteousness of men, and especially by *national judgments*, in such cases as these : When Religion is scorned and derided as an argument of a pusillanimous mind, or as an effect of superstition, or else is made use of as a cloak to cover maliciousness, revenge, and ambition ; when virtue and modesty are accounted parts of ill breeding ; and when wickedness ap-

pears

appears bold and impudent in the day-light; when luxury, and effeminacy, and a dissolution of manners have overspread a people; when no regard is had to the sacred ties and religion of repeated *Oaths* and *Sacraments*, and to the most solemn obligations of natural and civil right and justice; when the public worship of God is slighted, and no check given to Atheism and profaneness; when men live as if there were no God, or which is worse, cared not for him; when blasphemies against God, and Christ, and the mysteries of our holy religion are tolerated, and go unpunished; when such kind of impieties, all or some, more or less, become common, and prevail in a Nation, ruine cannot be afar off.

It is time for thee, Lord, to work, for they have made void thy law. Psalm

CXIX. 126. We may safely and allowably pretend to foretel, that vengeance hangs over the heads of such a people, unless a general repentance and reformation intervie, and avert the

impending evil. And tho no

Specialiter quædam pronuntiata generaliter sapiunt. Cum Deus Israelitas admonet disciplina vel oburgat, utique ad omnes habet: cum Agypto & Æthiopia exitum comminatur, in omnem gentem peccatricem præjudicat. Tertull. de spectaculis exedit. Rigalt. p. 91.

Prophets are now extraordinarily commissioned from heaven to prophecy against a nation, and to particularize the judgment; which God will inflict, except they amend; yet we may be as sure

of it, that so it will be, and we have as much reason to expect it, as if there were: because God has revealed his mind and will in his holy word, and signified his intentions sufficiently, that thus and thus he will proceed with an obstinate and incorrigible people.

3. *Judgments* serve for examples and warning to others. Punishment is so essential to government, that without this it would soon be dissolved, and confusion and all manner of disorder would break in upon the world; it would be scarce possible to live with any kind of security. It is fear which keeps men in, and lays restraints upon their passions, which otherwise would break out in fury and madness: and what the sad and dismal consequences of the passions are, when once let loose, is easie to imagine; and of which we may frame some tolerable kind of idea from the murders, the sacrilegious rapines, the villanies, the desolations, caused by a *brutish rabble*. So that punishment becomes necessary, not only that the criminal may make some satisfaction for the breach of Law, but for security of the publick peace; that others, if the crime be capital especially, seeing his shameful and untimely end, may be deterred from following his bad example. Which consideration is enough to vindicate the severity of the Laws upon the
 worser

worser sort of malefactors; not as if any delight were designed to be taken by heightning or prolonging the misery of any one, be his crime never so heinous, but only *in terrorem*, to affright those who survive from attempting the like wickedness; and to assure them withal, what they are to expect, if they do so. This very method God Almighty is pleased to make use of in the government of the world. His Laws are established with sanctions of rewards and punishments, according as we either observe or disobey them. None can pretend ignorance, or complain of a surprize, that they are punished before they knew the danger of the Sin. For every judgment is a plain denunciation and threatening from heaven, that if we equal others in their sin, we may be made equal to them in their punishment. It is true, God takes his own time to punish: he doth oftentimes forbear upon most gracious and wise designs: he doth often let the sinner go on in his sins, because the sinner is in his power, and cannot escape him: and the like is to be said of a sinful nation; but then this is only a reprieve and respite; no revocation of the sentence, which is gone out against it; and it is the highest provocation of Justice to take no warning; it is an unpardonable stupidity, and the direct and ready way to ruine.

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Whatever judgments are inflicted in this world, concern others, as well as those on whom they are inflicted. *These things are our examples,* as *Saint Paul* does most rationally conclude from the overthrow of the *Israelites* in the Wilderness, *1 Cor. x. 6. to the intent, that we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.* Now let us consider, what is it that has ruined so many famous Monarchies, but luxury, and pride, and base perfidiousness, and irreligion; how many glorious Cities have been demolished and destroyed by war, fire, and earthquakes; whose ruines will be eternal monuments of their sin, and of the divine vengeance. All history abounds with examples, and above all the Sacred, which serves not only to inform us of past events, but for direction and warning of what will be; they are the standing registers of Gods proceedings with men: the prophecies against *Jerusalem*, against *Babylon*, against *Nineve*, in the general are in force still, making allowances for the variety of circumstances, as to those times and these, as if they were directed to Christendom, and the Nations out of it, and their Capital Cities. *They are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the Earth are come.* Look about and see, what desolations are brought upon the Earth; go and enquire of the ages past, and con-

sider, how God has dealt with them in his anger, how he hath made *their own wickedness to correct them*: as the Prophet speaks, *Jerem. ii. 19.* how he has given up, some to the violence and fury of an enraged foreign Enemy; others to the more raging furies of a Civil War, how he has sent pestilential diseases and other plagues among them, and the like. By which examples God doth forewarn all other Nations, as well as the people of the same in different times, of the certain and woful, and unavoidable consequence of Sin persisted in, and unrepented of.

The belief of this truth, that the *Judgments* which are in the world are the effects of Gods displeasure, is necessary in order to our receiving benefit, and making that right use of them to which they are designed. For so long as *Providence* is denied, and the justice and power of God called in question, and the threatenings of Scripture disbelieved, and lookt upon as *bruta fulmina*, empty sound and noise, and only natural causes supposed to be concerned in the dismal *Judgments*, which have been, and are in the world, without the superintendency of the first and supream cause, and that all things come to pass either by chance, as causes, which have no dependence one upon another, happen to be joynd, or by a fatal necessity; it is a very easy consequence,

sequence, that men of this persuasion should continue in the same ill course of life, and be never a whit the better for the most astonishing calamities. Fear indeed is usually wrought in the minds of the stoutest and most resolute by *Judgments*. Psal. lvii. 8. *Thou didst cause Judgment to be heard from heaven; the Earth feared, and was still.* But this may flow only from a principle of self-preservation. The most hardy and bold, *the wits and the Hobbists, les beaux et les forts esprits*, for all their sophistry and artificial evasions, and for all their principles of fate and prædestination, have an abhorrence of sudden death; nor indeed can they think of any kind of death with any patience, whose hopes are only confined to the animal life: it may also oftentimes be, and for the most part is, only a kind of present horror, a being troubled at the danger, lest it may involve them, as well as others; and a meer effect of surprize and astonishment: like the Emperour *Caligula*, who was afraid, and crept under his bed, when it thundered, but as mad and as dissolute as ever, as soon as the noise was over.

But certainly all sober and serious people will make a better use of the *judgments* of God, and in such cases conduct and govern themselves and their behaviour by true measures of wisdom and piety, and especially by these two following rules.

1. That we look up to God in all times of publick distress and calamity. For will it not be a foolish obstinacy beyond all aggravation to complain of the stroke and smart, and not see the inflicting hand, which is so visibly lifted up? No one certainly can be so slight an observer of the age, wherein he lives, as not to see enough to convince him, that *there is a God, who judgeth in the earth*, and that he brings about those revolutions, which are in the world. Psalm lxiv. 9. *all men that see it, shall say, this hath God done, they shall perceive that it is his work.*

But tho we are to observe, and admire, and adore *Providence*, we must not presume to justify any evil action by it, as if success of it self were a sufficient proof, encouragement and approbation of it. For we cannot but remember, how this was the common theme and topick in the late times, I mean before the year 1660, of popular discourses both from the pulpit and the press, to justify the cursed rebellion of forty one, that *the God of hosts fought for his Saints and Servants at Marston-more, and gave them victory over his and their enemies*, that is, their *rightful Sovereign*, to whom they had often sworn allegiance; and his *faithful Subjects*: and *appeared most gloriously on their side at Naseby*, and the like: and *Bradsham* in his speech, just before his

pronouncing the sentence of death upon the blessed King *Charles the first*, in which he most wickedly misapplies Law, and the history of the tumultuous times of K. *Edward the Second*, and K. *Richard the Second*, together with foreign examples of the like villany, as if they had been just and authentick proofs of what they were then acting, appeals to *Providence*, and saith, that *God had dealt gloriously and miraculously for them.*

Providence cannot, without an imputation upon the righteous government of God, be supposed, much more made use of, as a plea or argument, to justify that, which religion and the divine law severely prohibit: tho' judgments, by what means or instruments soever brought about, are full proof of Gods anger and displeasure against sin. In every judgment God doth as it were thunder out of heaven, and we must be more than deaf, that is, affectedly stupid, if we will not hear and take notice. Micah vi. 9. *The Lords voice cryeth unto the City, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: bear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.*

2. That we reflect upon our sins, which are the meritorious cause of Gods dealing thus severely with us. In general, may we not justly fear, that the Lord hath a controversy with England, for

for the crying sins of it ; *because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land: by swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood?* Hoseah iv. 1, 2. and have we not reason also to fear, that the following menace will be fully executed upon us. v. 3. *therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish.* But without descending to a minute consideration of the publick sins, wherewith almost the whole nation in general stands charged, let us, as we are private persons, reflect upon our necessary dependance on God, that all we have we derive from his goodness, and that we cannot subsist one moment without his *providence*, which continues our being to us; and further consider, that notwithstanding those obligations to serve and obey him, which our being in the world, and our being of such an order of creatures, and our daily preservation lay upon us, we daily provoke God to anger: and if so, when ever we feel the smart of our Sins, we cannot but bow down our heads humbly before him, and adore his justice, which yet punisheth us less than we have deserved. *Righteous art thou O Lord, and true are thy judgments.* Psal. cxix. 133. *He doth not afflict willingly the children of men.* Lam. iii. 33. but we our selves pull down these

these judgments upon our heads; we will not let God as it were be at rest; we provoke him to wrath and indignation against us, by our ingratitude, and disobedience, and by an obstinate continuance in sin. Whenever therefore his hand is lifted up, and before it be lifted up, let us endeavour to atone his wrath by a hearty and speedy repentance: let us prostrate our selves before him, and deprecate his anger, that we be not consumed by the means of his heavy hand: and then we may be assured, that he will return to us in mercy, and will either avert or remove his *judgments* from us, and will heal us, and our *Land*, and *the breaches of it*, tho it shaketh, and is ready to fall into pieces.

F I N I S.

E R R A T A.

pAge 4. line 10. *all mankind*. p. 5. l. 16. for *best* r. *bad*. p. 6. l. 13. for *our* r. *out*. p. 10. l. 7. *first cause*.